

As an American who has been taught that a free press is a bastion of a healthy, functioning Democracy, I am deeply disturbed by a recent trend that I have perceived in which media consolidation results in a decrease of dissenting voices, criticism, and in depth reporting. This consolidation has furthermore shown itself to very easily play into the hands of partisan political interests, where owners of media conglomerates ignore or suppress facts to further their own political agenda. I feel that this trend could have very negative, long-term implications for America's future, where we could end up with a political system closer to Berlusconi's Italy than what the Framers had originally envisioned.

Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air a dubious and partisan anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is a clear example of the dangers of media consolidation.

Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. But when large companies control the airwaves, we get more of what's good for the bottom line and less of what we need for our democracy. Instead of something produced at "News Central" far away, it's more important that we see real people from our own communities and more substantive news about issues that matter.

Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a returned postcard. Thank you.